

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4693

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0532

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PBOR

SUBJECT: HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR DISPUTE: SAN JOSE MEETING OF MILITARY

REF: A) STATE 25605; B) SAN JOSE 375

1. GIVEN SENSITIVITY ATTACHED TO INFORMATION CONCERNING MEETING OF HONDURAN AND SALVADORAN MILITARY IN SAN JOSE LATE JANUARY BY OUR MISSION THERE (REF B), WE HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO QUERY MILITARY DIRECTLY ABOUT CONFERENCE. WE WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY BETRAND GALINDO'S COMMENTS (REF A) AND DATT HERE PURSUED QUESTION WITH CHIEF OF STAFF RODRIGUEZ.

2. RODRIGUEZ DESCRIBED CONFERENCE WITH HONDURAN COUNTERPART AS SECRET WITH ONLY A FEW MILITARY ADVISORS AND THE HONDURAN AND SALVADORAN AMBASSADOR PRESENT. WHILE THE ATMOSPHERE WAS REPORTEDLY CORDIAL, RODRIGUEZ CLAIMED THE DISCUSSIONS WERE OF A GENERAL NATURE AND CENTERED ON MEANS TO AVOID INCIDENTS AND TENSIONS ON THE BORDER. FOR EXAMPLE, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED TO TRY TO AVOID SHOOTING CATTLE RUSTLERS IN THE BORDER AREA AND CAPTURE THEM WITHOUT GUNPLAY INSTEAD. RODRIGUEZ STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO AGREE TO ANY ARRANGEMENTS BEYOND THOSE RELATING TO THE SECURITY SITUATION AND GAVE NO INDICATION THAT DEFACTO DELIMITATION OF THE BORDER, AS SUGGESTED BY ALVARADO PUERTO, WAS AMONG TOPICS DISCUSSED. RODRIGUEZ DID SAY THAT
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THE TWO SIDES HAD AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN FEBRUARY, SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE

OF EL SALVADOR. WE WILL ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP DETAILS OF THE
SAN JOSE MEETING FROM OTHER MILITARY AND FOREIGN OFFICE SOURCES.

3. RODRIGUEZ DESCRIBED GENERAL STATE OF RELATIONS WITH HIS
HONDURAN COLLEAGUES AS FAIRLY GOOD. AT THE SAN JOSE SESSION,
HOWEVER, HE ASKED THE HONDURAN CHIEF OF STAFF TO ADVISE HIS

OFFICERS DESTINED TO TRAINING COURSES IN PANAMA TO AVOID
COMMENTS ABOUT OUR CONFLICTS WITH SALVADORAN OFFICERS WHILE THERE.
A FEW UNFORTUNATE INCIDENTS HAVE APPARENTLY OCCURRED AND RODRIGUEZ
HAS WARNED HIS OFFICERS NOT TO PROVOKE THEM. WHILE THE DATT
WAS TALKING WITH RODRIGUEZ, THIRD ARMY BRIGADE (SAN MIGUEL)
COMMANDER COL ROJAS CALLED AND REPORTED ON A MEETING HE HAD HELD ON
THE BORDER FEB 7 WITH HIS HONDURAN COUNTERPART. THE SESSION
APPARENTLY HAD GONE WELL. RODRIGUEZ URGED ROJAS TO HOLD THESE
MEETINGS ON A WEEKLY BASIS BUT ROJAS EVIDENTLY TOLD HIM THAT
AGREEMENT ALREADY HAD BEEN REACHED TO MEET ON MONTHLY. RODRIGUEZ
SUGGESTED THAT ROJAS TAKE WITH HIM TO FUTURE SESSIONS OTHER
OFFICERS FROM THE BRIGADE, APPARENTLY TO BROADEN MILITARY
CONTACT WITH THE HONDURANS.

4. COMMENT: UNLESS WE DEVELOP ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO THE
CONTRARY, IT WOULD SEEM FROM RODRIGUEZ'S COMMENTS THAT THE SAN
JOSE SESSION REPRESENTED NO REAL BREAKTHROUGH ON THE STALE-
MATED NEGOTIATIONS. HIS INSISTENCE THAT HE WAS NOT "AUTHORIZED"
TO FORMALIZE ANY ARRANGEMENT WITH HIS HONDURAN COLLEAGUES AND
HIS ASSERTION THAT HIS CONVERSATIONS WERE LIMITED TO THE BORDER
SECURITY SITUATION LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT IF ANY DISCUSSIONS
OF A MIXED MILITARY COMMISSION TO DEMARCATHE BOUNDARY TOOK
PLACE, THEY WERE OF A VERY PRELIMINARY NATURE. THUS, IT
WOULD SEEM PREMATURE AT THIS POINT TO REGARD THIS FORUM AS THE
MEANS TO RESOLVE THE BOUNDARY ISSUE. IT COULD, OF COURSE,
TAKE ON CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE IF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
CONCEDES ITS REAL AUTHORITY AND IN ANY CASE IS A USEFUL MEANS
TO CONTINUE INFORMAL CONTACT IN THE ABSENCE OF BI-LATERAL
DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS.
SCOTT

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